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BATMAN

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DOUG
MOENCH
MIKE
MANLEY

KNIGHTQUEST
THE CRUSADE



APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

BATMAN



Night Becomes Woman

MUGGERS, DRUNKS,
DOERS AND PUMPS--
AN UNEVENTFUL NIGHT,
UNTIL NOW...

RIGHT
EYE--
MAGNIFY.

...UNTIL SHE
ENTERS IT.

CATWOMAN--A LIVING
SHADE OF RAW, SLEEK
DARKNESS...

...BRAZENLY
FURTIVE...

...VIVIDLY
TANTALIZING.

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SHE MOVES IN
GRACE THROUGH
MYSTERY.



AND THEN
SHE'S GONE...



CLOSE ENOUGH TO
GLIMPSE, TOO DISTANT
TO REACH.

...LEAVING ME
FASCINATED...

...BUT SOMEBODY
DOUBTING THE
MAGNIFIED
EVIDENCE OF
MY OWN EYE.

VISION--
NORMAL.



AND IF SO,
WHY WAS
SHE THERE?

WAS SHE EVER
REALLY THERE?



WHY WAS
SHE RUNNING
FREE?

WHY HAS THE
FORMER BATMAN
NEVER TAKEN HER
DOWN FOR GOOD?

LINE-
TAUT.

GRAPNEL-
RELEASE.

WAS BRUCE WAYNE
ALSO FASCINATED
BY HER GRACE
AND MYSTERY?

WAS HE EVER
CLOSE
ENOUGH
TO REACH
HER?

TO TOUCH
HER?

IF SO, WAS
THE TOUCH
ROUGH?

OR TENDER?

LINE-
RETRACT.

SHIFT

SKREEEENNN

FREE!
GOTHAM GAZETTE
TRADE SUMMIT
TERROR!

ALMOST
DAWN.

SCREEECH

MAYBE I'LL
DREAM
ABOUT HER...

A CAT-BURGLAR SLIPPING
AND GLIDING THROUGH THE
NIGHT, HER BODY CUTTING
THE DARKNESS IN WHISPERS.

A THIEF WHO TAKES
MORE THAN THE
BRIGHT GLITTER OF
DIAMONDS AND
PEARLS.

A WOMAN, A SHADOW,
WHO CAN STEAL A
MAN'S EYE AND HIS
IMAGINATION...

MAYBE EVEN
HIS HEART.

IF IT'S DARK
ENOUGH.

--AND IN THE WAKE
OF THE RECENT TERRORIST
BOMBING DISASTER,...



WORLD TRADE
SUMMIT

I DID DREAM
ABOUT HER...

...POLICE
COMMISSIONER JAMES GORDON
HAS ASSURED INCREASED POLICE
PRESENCE FOR WEDNESDAY'S
WORLD TRADE SUMMIT
HERE IN GOTHAM...

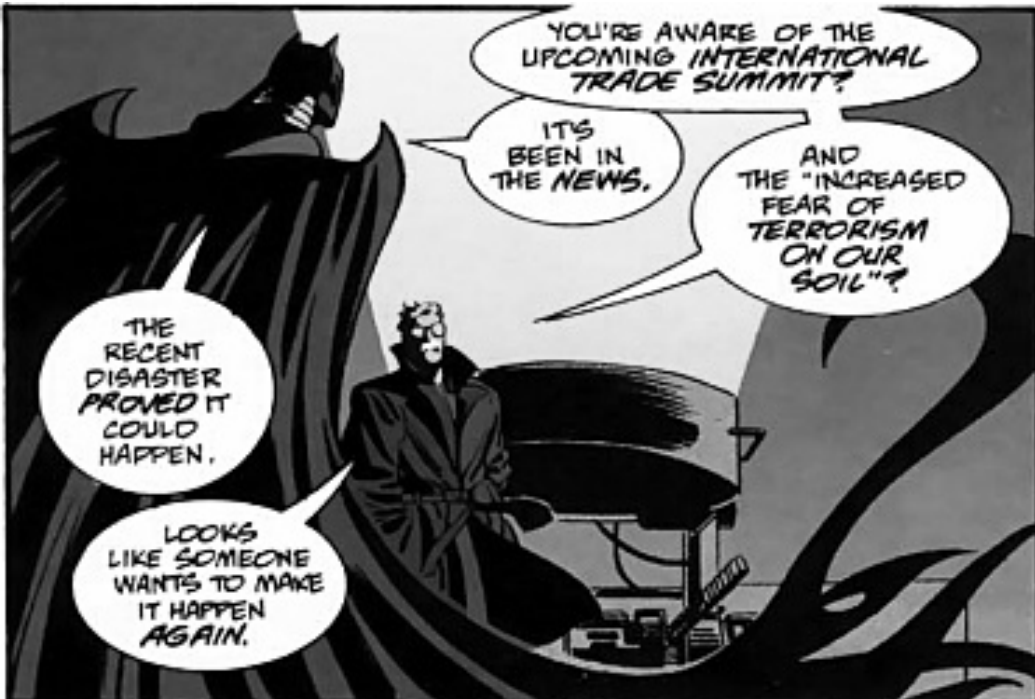
...ALL THE WAY
TO DARKNESS.

AND THE
DREAMS
WERE...

...SHAMEFUL.

WHAT
IS IT,
GORDON?

EH--?
THERE
YOU
ARE...



THE RECENT DISASTER PROVED IT COULD HAPPEN.

LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE WANTS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN AGAIN.

YOU'RE AWARE OF THE UPCOMING INTERNATIONAL TRADE SUMMIT?

IT'S BEEN IN THE NEWS.

AND THE "INCREASED FEAR OF TERRORISM ON OUR SOIL"?



YOU HAVE EVIDENCE OF ANOTHER BOMBING BEING PLANNED?



NOT A BOMBING, BUT...

...MAYBE SOMETHING MUCH WORSE.



WHAT COULD BE--

XYKLON-C-- AN EXTREMELY CONCENTRATED NEURO-TOXIN...



WHERE?

...TWENTY KILOS STOLEN LAST NIGHT.

FROM A STORAGE FACILITY ON THE HARBORPOINT WHARF, WHERE IT WAS AWAITING SHIPMENT TO ITS ULTIMATE DESTIN--



THE CATWOMAN-- I SAW HER ON THE WHARF...

CATWOMAN--? STEALING NERVE GAS?



SHE WAS TOO FAR AWAY... BUT I STILL SHOULD HAVE TRIED TO FOLLOW HER.

BUT WHY WOULD CATWOMAN STEAL SOMETHING LIKE...

SHE'S GOTHAM'S GREATEST THIEF, ISN'T SHE?



BUT THAT'S MY POINT. SHE'S NEVER KILLED ANYONE. SHE'S A CAT-BURGLAR...

...NEVER REALLY HURTS HER VICTIMS—EVEN AVOIDS CONTACT WITH THEM.



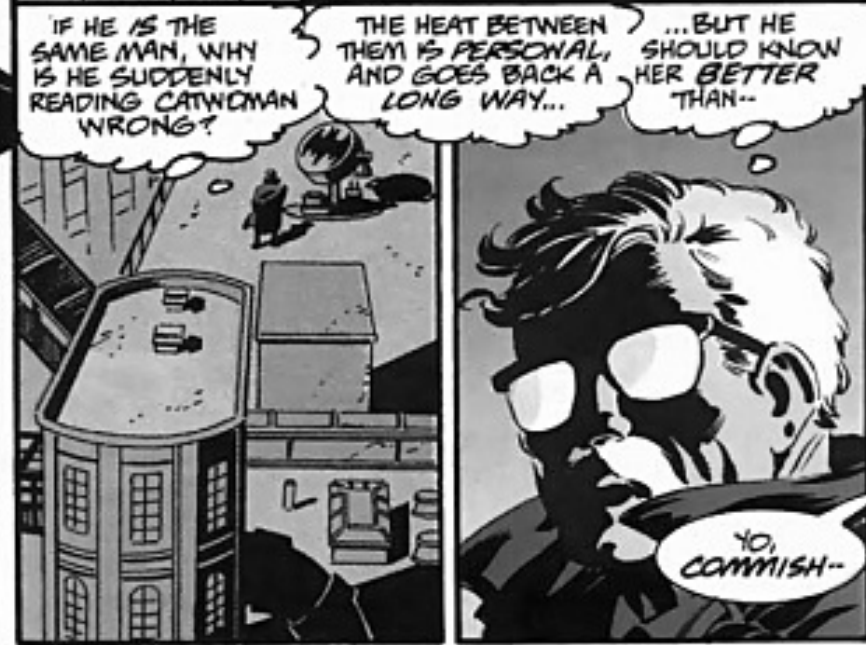
WHY WOULD SHE SUDDENLY—

I SAW HER, GORDON—LAST NIGHT...



...ON THE WHARF.

AND THE DREAMS, NOW, CAN NEVER BE MORE THAN DARK FANTASY.



IF HE IS THE SAME MAN, WHY IS HE SUDDENLY READING CATWOMAN WRONG?

THE HEAT BETWEEN THEM IS PERSONAL, AND GOES BACK A LONG WAY...

...BUT HE SHOULD KNOW HER BETTER THAN...

YO, COMMISS--



ACCORDING TO GORDON'S INFORMATION, AIRBORNE XYKLON-C DIRECTLY ATTACKS THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM...

CONVULSIONS... DISORIENTATION... UNCONTROLLABLE VOMITING... EXTREME AND PROLONGED PAIN... FOLLOWED BY DEATH.

IF THE WINDS ARE RIGHT-OR WRONG-TWENTY KILOS WOULD BE ENOUGH TO KILL HUNDREDS, EVEN THOUSANDS, AND MAYBE SICKEN THE WHOLE CITY.

BUT IF CATWOMAN COULD STEAL THE XYKLON-C ITSELF, SHE CAN CERTAINLY LIFT ENOUGH ATROPHANE TO MIX AN EXTREMELY VALUABLE COCKTAIL.

AND EVEN IF GORDON'S RIGHT ABOUT HER MOTIVES--GREED RATHER THAN KILLING--WHAT'S TO PREVENT HER FROM "FENCING" THE STUFF?

TO TERRORISTS, IT'D BE WORTH FAR MORE THAN ITS WEIGHT IN DIAMONDS OR GOLD...

A JOB FOR THE BATMAN, IF EVER THERE WAS ONE.

THE ONLY BRIGHT NOTE IS THAT IT'S STORED AND SHIPPED IN ITS INERT LIQUID FORM--THE FORM IN WHICH IT WAS STOLEN...

...AND REQUIRES A CATALYST CALLED ATROPHANE TO BE RENDERED ACTIVE.



HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN
FASCINATED BY SUCH A
WOMAN? HOW COULD I
DREAM ABOUT HER?



DO CERTAIN FORMS OF
EVIL HOLD SOME DARK
BEAUTY TO WHICH NO
MAN IS IMMUNE?

IS THAT WHY SHE'S FREE--
THE FORMER BATMAN
HASN'T TAKEN HER DOWN?

WAS BRUCE WAYNE
EQUALLY FASCINATED
BY HER MYSTERIOUS
ALLURE?



IT DOESN'T
MATTER.



BRUCE WAYNE
IS GONE...

... HIS LIFE
YESTERDAY'S NEWS...



... AND IF CATWOMAN
EVER DID MEAN
ANYTHING TO THE
BATMAN... IT'S OVER
NOW.



SHE FALLS--
AND FALLS HARD.

AS YOU KNOW, DR. CARRUTHERS,
THE ATTENDING NATIONS HAVE REFUSED
TO CANCEL THE PENDING SUMMIT OR TO
"BOW TO TERRORIST THREATS IN ANY
WAY OR FASHION..."

...AN UNWISE
ATTITUDE, IN MY
OPINION, AT THIS
JUNCTURE.

Pttttt

MRAOWW

SO, EVEN THOUGH
THERE WILL BE
EXTRAORDINARY
SECURITY MEASURES
TAKEN AT THE
CONFERENCE -

THERE IS NO SECURITY AGAINST
A MASSIVE DISPERSAL OF THESE
NEUROTOXINS, EITHER AIRBORNE
OR RELEASED IN THE CITY'S WATER
SUPPLY - OR EVEN SIMPLY DUMPED
IN GOTHAM HARBOR.

MYOW!!

MIAOW

MEEYAOW

WHICH
IS PRECISELY WHY I'VE
GOT TO STEAL TWENTY
KILOS OF
BENZOTRILENE.

MRAOWWW

THREE POSSIBLE SITES
FOR WHAT SHE'S AFTER.

GOT TO MONITOR
ALL THREE.

HAROLD MADE SOME
REMARKABLE THINGS
FOR BRUCE WAYNE...

...AND THERE'S NO WAY
SHE'LL SUSPECT MOTION
DETECTORS AT
CHEMICAL SUPPLY
WAREHOUSES.

ROOFTOP
ONE.

TWO.

AND
THREE.

NOW TO WAIT IN THE
CAR AT SOME PLACE
WITHIN RANGE OF
ALL THREE
DETECTORS.











AND
NOW... WHO'S
TYING
WHOM?

SHE'S MORE
THAN I
DREAMED—
WITH INCREDIBLE
MOVES.

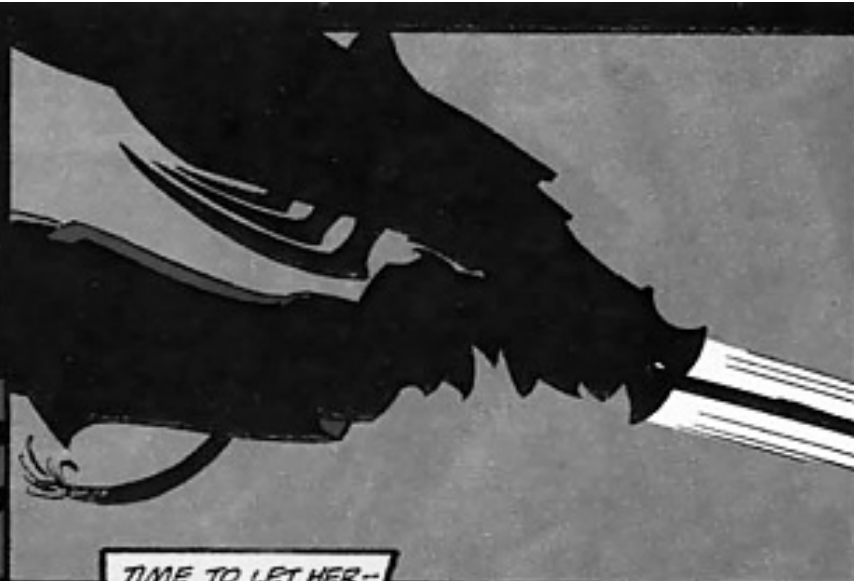




BUT I'VE SEEN--

--ENOUGH.

--ESCAPE.



TIME TO LET HER--



A black and white comic book page depicting a confrontation between Batman and Catwoman in a warehouse. Batman, in his iconic suit and cape, stands amidst a large pile of wooden barrels. He has a determined expression. Catwoman, in her signature bodysuit and mask, is shown in a dynamic pose, having just jumped or landed near the barrels. The scene is filled with action, as evidenced by the sound effects and the characters' expressions. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, emphasizing the textures of the barrels and the characters' costumes.

I GAVE HER AN EXIT--
BUT SHE'S ADDED A
TWIST I DIDN'T
ANTICIPATE.

CLOSE...
BUT STILL
EASY TO
EVADE...

...BECAUSE
IT'S ONLY
ONE...

CH-TUM!

...LET'S
SEE HOW HE
FARES...

...WITH
MORE.

I'D PLANNED A
MOMENTARY LACK OF
PURSUIT, BUT NOW...

...MAYBE I WON'T
HAVE TO FAKE IT.

BWANG

KTHUNK!

BWANG
KLASH!



THEY HIT HARD,
BUT I LET MYSELF
GO DOWN WITH THE
FIRST IMPACT...



...AND ROLL
WITH THE REST.



--BUT THE NEW
SUITS PADDING
WORKS WELL...

I'LL HAVE
BRUISES--

...AND HER
HEADSTART IS
MORE THAN
LONG ENOUGH.



COULD HAVE JUST
WAITED UNTIL SHE
CAME OUT, AND THEN
FOLLOWED HER, BUT
I WANTED TO PREVENT
THE THEFT OF THE
CATALYST.



AND, TOO, I MAY
AS WELL ADMIT I
COULDN'T RESIST--
HAD TO SEE HER,
TEST HER--TRY TO
PENETRATE HER
MYSTERY...



VOWED SHE WOULD
FALL, BUT MAYBE I
WAS WRONG-- IN
DENIAL.



MAYBE I'VE
FALLEN, AND
FALLEN HARD...

...BUT SHE
STILL GOES
DOWN.



I HELD BACK IN
THE WAREHOUSE--
SHAMED
MYSELF...



...JUST LIKE
MY DREAMS.



THIS TIME,
I HOLD NOTHING
BACK,

THIS TIME...
I MAKE THE
CAT HOWL.

Continued In
CATWOMAN #6
and
BATMAN #504:
DARK DANCE.



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CORRECTION DEPARTMENT:

Credit for the breathtaking coloring on the die-cut and embossed cover of the direct edition of **BATMAN #500** should have gone to Lovern Kindzierski; my sincerest apologies to him, and some confused fans, for the omission from that issue's cover credits box.

Dear Denny and Jordan,
Thunch. Kresh. Uhn! Agh-k! Skrash.
Wump. Chup. Krunch. Chft. Shokk.
Kwump. Shump. Wump. Hwok. Bamp.
Prak. Wubasht. Swap. Tump. Choof. Keesh.
"Jason..."
"Robin..."
Thup. Tud. Chwok. Skutch. Ahrrr! Ahn!
"Go back to hell."
Swok.
Kraak...duft.
Re: **BATMAN #497**
All I can say is...ouch.

Bruce Russell
Sherwood, Australia

Swup tup kup, blash, shing shing shing!

Dear Bat-friends,
I just finished **BATMAN #497**. I had heard that Batman's back was going to be broken by Bane, but, to use a cliché, nothing could have prepared me for this, not even all of the previous "Knightfall" issues.

You see, I feel that I can relate to Batman more than most. I work as a store detective (you may know us better as "floor walkers" though we actually do much more, and besides, we have our pride) for a major retailer in the mid-west. My job requires me to detain and arrest people who often have warrants on them for assault, drug trafficking, aggravated robbery, attempted murder and even murder. I am allowed to utilize only techniques in hand-to-hand combat for physicals and abide by a strict code of conduct and ethics. My store chain is Batman's Gotham City. Many in my chain have been shot at, stabbed, beaten, and last year one of our people was killed over \$100. Many in my field have been psychologically scarred by violent stops.

I am glad to see you are dealing with the psychological issues in "Knightfall" and think it has been done very well and congratulate you on an excellent set of stories. But, watching what happened to Batman was extremely painful. I realize this is fiction, but please, if you do not intend for Batman to return (no pun) to the streets, tell me now. If you intend to let him heal and return to work, do it soon. Otherwise I will have to stop buying some of the best comics in the industry. It's just too painful.

In case this reaches print, I'd like to thank all the readers out there who are police officers for the work you do each day you wear

your uniform (also known as "target"). You are a breed that is too often maligned and not appreciated. You are the super-heroes.

Name and address withheld

P.S. Please withhold my name and address as I have dealt with many people at work who belong in Arkham and I don't need any of them knowing where I live. Thanks.

Though I cannot reveal anything about where we are going with Bruce and Paul—that would suck all the entertainment value out of what we are doing here—I sincerely hope you will nevertheless remain a loyal reader.

What I will say is that "Knightquest" should definitely interest you as "The Crusade" follows the adventures of the rookie with a new "target," and "The Search" follows the journey of the seasoned pro back from his most violent attempted "stop." Plus, there are plenty of surprises along the way, the first of which will occur in **SHADOW OF THE BAT #25** and a concurrent multiparter featuring the Joker over in **DETECTIVE COMICS**.

Dear Jordan,

With clenched teeth and sweaty palms I slowly and painfully read **BATMAN #497**. Heck, with all the media coverage, we knew what was going to happen here. Bane was going to break the Batman's back. It didn't make it any easier...

Page after page I screamed, "Where's the damn Rocky theme music? Batman—come on, you just gotta win!"

But that damn "Rocky" theme music never came.

Michelle E. Koller
Washington, MI

Dear Bat-breakers,

After **BATMAN #497** Bruce Wayne will desperately need a chiropractor. Therefore, I am offering myself to him in the guise of my alter ego, "Backman." I have put myself on 24-hour call. When you need me, just run whatever's left of Batman's spine up Commissioner Gordon's flagpole and I will be there.

Dr. Peter Allegra
Rocky Hill, CT

P.S. I don't do Azraels.

Thanks to Doc Allegra and all the other members of medical professions for their generous offers and sympathy cards.

Dear Dennis and all you schemers at the "Bat-summit,"

Running low on sacred cows?
Maybe it's my fault, basking in the fantastic art and great writing over the

past year. I only wrote when I was unhappy. Not even a 900 number? Oh, yes, CNN reported that he was not going to die, just suffer a broken back. Now maybe Bruce and Jack Drake will have something to talk about. I'm sure we can expect a Barbara Gordon guest spot to help Bruce deal with the frustration of losing his mobility.

In a world where real-life heroes are all too often taken from us, why does DC Comics find it necessary to do the same to our fictional idols? Perhaps the readers have no right to expect those characters to always be there for us. DC "owns" them. You have the right to control their fates. Our only option is to stop buying and grudgingly admit, "Oh, well, it was just a comic book."

I'm sure you've become insensitive to negative reader reactions to such shocking plot twists, especially in light of the profits they must generate among the collection-minded vultures who buy 20 copies of each "end-of-a-hero" issue. It all seems ghoulish, and I feel it's my devotion to the title that's really being sold.

Of course, my devotion isn't so complete as to render life meaningless after "Knightfall," but I have to tell you, I'll never be able to connect with Azrael in the way I do with Wayne. Wayne is human enough to recognize, yet strong enough to overcome what we're afraid to face in ourselves. This is the magic of Batman, that somehow we are all behind the mask. I can find nothing of myself in the Avenging Angel of St. Dumas, and I don't want him to be all there is under the cowl.

To quote Alfred Pennyworth, "Seeing another in that suit made me sick with fear."
Todd Wm. Ristau
Iowa City, IA

...I don't want this to be the start of a trend in which the hero gets beaten to a pulp, must disappear for a few issues and is replaced by someone else. What's next—Aquaman drowns?

Joe Christiano
Waterbury, CT

We kinda thought about Wonder Woman on maternity leave...

...I can't even explain in words how horrible it was to see Batman being beat up. Does DC think that the readers of their books like to see heroes massacred by some Neanderthal? Well, we don't!

Batman—created by Bob Kane, killed by greed.

Jared Pace
Northumberland, PA

Dear Bat-signals,
As a newly-indoctrinated comics collector, I strolled into my favorite shop to pick up the latest part of "Reign of the Superman" when the BATMAN #497 cover jumped out at me. I could not believe the Batman could be put into that position. Needless to say, I picked up all the titles in the "Knightfall" series. This is one of the best stories I have ever seen or read. Dennis, Jordan, Doug and Jim, you have a winner here. My only regret is that it took "The Breaking of the Batman" to start it off.

Rob Wheary, Jr.
address not supplied

Started is right, Rob—welcome aboard!

Bat-guys,
Re: BATMAN #497

I haven't purchased a DC Comic in a very long time—in fact, not since you men had Barbara Gordon raped, shot, dumped in a wheelchair and into limbo. However, as it was partially Batman's fault that this happened to her, I couldn't pass up seeing Bane beat the crap out of Batman. Every time I saw Bane punching and whacking the Masked Manhunter, I imagined Barbara Gordon was doing it! Sadly, we all know that Batman won't be in the dumpster forever and will be back in action...in time. More sad is the fact that Barbara Gordon will probably forever remain in limbo and in that wheelchair.

Thanks for an enjoyable issue.

Darlene Gaos
Wellesley, MA

I know a few people who would take umbrage at being referred to as having been "dumped" in a wheelchair. Barbara is trying to conquer her immobility with her indomitable spirit as have others in similar, irreparable conditions (see issues of THE HACKER FILES). Anyone out there able to react from personal experience?

Dear Bat-whackers,

There once was a man named Bane, who was more than a little insane. He came into the cave, that home of the brave, and inflicted some serious pain.

Thomas J. Takach
St. Petersburg, FL

Dear Denny and Jordan,

I'm of two minds about BATMAN #497. Allow me to elucidate:

Point: Showing Batman getting soundly defeated by Bane was a gutsy move on DC's part, resulting in a memorable, sit-up-and-take-notice story.

Counterpoint: But Batman's the hero of the book, the guy the creators should feel protective toward! And they gave us a story where not only did he experience total defeat, but he didn't even make a good showing of himself along the way. Batman stumbled through the whole issue in a daze!

Point: Yes, but he had good reason to! The flashbacks to his many other battles during the "Knightfall" epic showed that it was only natural that he was on his last legs by the time Bane confronted him.

Counterpoint: Yeah, about those flashbacks—ugh! They slowed the

momentum of the story considerably, not to mention that they showed us stuff we already knew! A couple of descriptive panels would just as effectively have told new readers that the Batman's been through a lot lately and just how drained he was at that point. But getting back to the battle, exhausted or not, the Batman should have made a better accounting of himself. After all, even though Luke Skywalker was soundly defeated by Darth Vader at the end of "The Empire Strikes Back," he gave Vader a run for his money along the way!

Point: Well, sometimes the creators are the advocate of the character they oversee and sometimes they're the advocate of the magazines that feature him. In this case, they favored boosting the quality of the magazine by giving us an unpredictable, never-before-seen occurrence—the total defeat of their hero. I'm sure the time will come when their protectiveness will shift back to their featured character, and Bruce Wayne will pull the mask back on and show the world just how resilient he really is. Then Bane will see a real battle!

Counterpoint: We'll see. But I have to say, this issue wasn't too much fun to read.

Point: Maybe it wasn't exactly fun, but it had you turning the pages, didn't it?

You get the picture. I can't decide if I loved or hated this issue, but there's no disputing the fact that it was thought-provoking.

Joe Menta, Jr.
Philadelphia, PA

That was the whole point, Joe!

Dear Denny and Jordan,

BATMAN #497 was quite simply the most emotional Bat-comic I have ever read. "Knightfall" is the best storyline to run through the regular Bat-titles since "A Death in the Family."

Doug Moench's script was taut and full of emotions. I've always hated flashback scenes, but Doug worked them perfectly in this issue. The art is Jim Aparo's best, bar none. This is due probably to Dick Giordano's wonderful inks. That man seems to be around for all the major Bat-events, doesn't he?

The Bat-titles are in peak form. Doug, Chuck, Jim, Graham, Scott, Kelley et al. have made the Bat-titles the best super-hero comics out there. Thank you.

Tony Escobar, Jr.
Pearsall, TX

To those who are in it for profit,

By the time you read this, BATMAN #497 will already have hit the stands. I want to tell something to all those people who came out and only bought this one issue of "Knightfall." *Kiss off!* I have been collecting BATMAN since issue #400 and have always been able to get an issue of BATMAN or DETECTIVE COMICS. Notice I only say one issue and not several issues, because I actually read these books! This is the first time that I have been unable to get an issue of BATMAN because it was sold out. My regular comics stores had about 300+ copies of BATMAN #497 and they were all gone within an hour. I wouldn't be surprised if one person bought 15

copies and let them sit in a box, never to be read. Well, why don't you leave some of those comics there for people who actually read them!

To the Bat-people, I would like to say that BATMAN #497 was an excellent issue, but I wouldn't know because I never got to read one.

Paul "Really P.O.ed" Cerveney
address withheld by request

I'll make you a deal—I'll trade you a copy of BATMAN #497 for Billy Joel tickets which sold out in a half hour.

Dear Jordan,

Re: BATMAN #497

DC missed the perfect collector's item opportunity. We've had hologram covers, embossed covers, cardboard covers and die-cut covers before. They've had nothing to do with the contents. My suggestion is simple and fit in with the story—the world's first comic book produced with a broken spine!

Augie De Blicke, Jr.
North Haledon, NJ

Fan-boys of the world cringe...

MTGGFLF,

Gorf

—Keeping perspective.

ELSEWHERE: Knightquest: The Search heats up as Bruce and Alfred go undercover to find Shondra and Jack Drake in England in **SHADOW OF THE BAT #21-23** by Alan Grant and Bret Blevins (who are doing some of the best work of their respective careers, so do not miss it!). In **Knightquest: The Crusade**, Montoya confronts her idol, Batman, who ain't exactly like he used to be, in **DETECTIVE COMICS #670** by Chuck Dixon, Scott Hanna and so hot-hot-hot he's cool-cool-cool guest artist Barry Kitson. Also, Robin is keeping busy tracking escaped convict Cluemaster and his new partner, Electrocutioner. All that stands in his way is...an acquaintance (a hooded one!) in **ROBIN #3** by Chuck Dixon, Tom Grummett and Ray Kryssing.

IN ONE MONTH: A Bat-Cat showdown, the likes of which you have never seen before! It's gargoyle heaven in **BATMAN #504, Knightquest: The Crusade**, by Doug Moench and Mike Manley. While you are at it, check out **CATWOMAN #6 & #7**, which tie in to our Bat meets Cat storyline. It is not obligatory, but you will thank me for it!

COVER CREDITS: Art by Kelley Jones, color by Bob Le Rose, supervision by Curtis King.

